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## IMPORTED WILD BIRDS NOT EARLY ESTABLISHED HERE

Importations of foreign birds for the stocking of game coverts, or in the hope of adding to the variety of bird music in the woods, or for warfare on insect pests, have led to strange and unexpected results. Probably few persons anticipated that the English sparrow would thrive and multiply and spread itself over the whole continent as it has since the first scattering importations were made on the Atlantic coast in the early 1850's. On the other hand, bird lovers, sportsmen, and State game authorities have spent thousands of dollars in efforts to acclimatize and establish desirable varieties of game birds. Reckoned by number, a large proportion of the attempts have failed. Sometimes the birds have simply disappeared and were never seen again, leaving the importers wondering whether they may have migrated or fallen prey to disease or animals in the new environment. At times sportsmen have grown crops on game preserves with the expectation of allowing the birds to harvest the crops and enjoy a favorable chance for colonization. In other instances, birds have seemed to settle down and nest and reproduce satisfactorily for a year or more, only to vanish a few years later, apparently gaining stamina and reproductive power for a few years only to lose it later. The English sparrow increased in numbers and in range for perhaps 30 to 40 years when it reached a peak of abundance and was considered a serious pest. In recent years, these birds have declined greatly in numbers both in cities and in rural districts, and nature seems to be setting a balance in regard to them.

The foregoing is representative of the general discussion of the subject that Dr. John C. Phillips offers in a 64-page pamphlet, "Wild Birds Introduced or Transplanted in North America," just published by the United States Department of Agriculture as Technical Bulletin 61-T. Doctor Phillips has cooperated with the Bureau of Biological Survey, and has collected a great quantity of records and reports that he summarizes briefly for each species and variety for

which he has been able to gather facts. He prefaces his report with the statement that "the early history of the introduction of foreign birds into this country is mostly clothed in darkness. The records of many attempts, if such there were, have long since been buried in back numbers of local newspapers, and if any experiment was successful it was soon forgotten." For the most part he has depended on the files of sportsmen's magazines, the records of the Biological Survey, and supplementary correspondence with many bird lovers and biologists in various regions where birds have been liberated. Since 1900 the records of the Biological Survey are a complete guide to importations. Many birds imported as cage birds have been freed or have escaped and some have established themselves in favored localities.

One principal use of this bulletin, the author believes, will be to record and bring to the attention of those who attempt to acclimatize birds a record of the failures with the same or similar birds, and so prevent waste of money in ill-considered introductions.

Doctor Phillips devotes several pages to the various kinds of quail, including the bobwhite, and tells how these have been moved about from one section to another, sometimes successfully but often unsuccessfully. Massachusetts sportsmen began comparatively early to import quail, first from the Ohio Valley, later from Kansas and the Indian Territory, and still later from Mexico. When Mexican birds were first imported the prices ran as low as \$1.50 a dozen. Later the Ohio Valley and even Oklahoma and Texas, which were at one time dependable sources of supply, also found their game so depleted that they in turn bought to restock. From 1910 to 1925, the author reports, more than 233,000 Mexican bobwhites are recorded as having entered the United States, and the price has steadily risen to \$24 to \$36 a dozen.

In the new bulletin the author gives facts concerning importations and acclimatization experiments with more than 100 species and varieties of wild birds. Technical Bulletin 61-T may be obtained free upon application to the United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

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